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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from April 2006 to February 2007

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 61/129 of 14 December 2006, considered it important to continue and expand its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, with particular emphasis on the options of self-determination available for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and to that end, requested the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, including through the United Nations information centres in the relevant regions, to disseminate material to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In paragraphs 4 and 5 of that resolution, the Assembly also requested the Department of Public Information to prepare an information leaflet on the assistance programmes available to those Territories, and requested the Department, together with the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, to take measures through all the media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization. The present report, prepared in response to that mandate, covers the period from April 2006 to February 2007.

2. During the reporting period, the Department of Public Information covered decolonization issues extensively through press releases in both print and online formats, through news stories in the official languages, in all areas of its news outputs on the United Nations website, and through radio and various publications. The coverage focused on the work of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

3. The Department, working with the Department of Political Affairs, prepared a brochure entitled "What the United Nations Can Do to Assist Non-Self-Governing Territories", which provides details on United Nations bodies that offer assistance to

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these Territories in the exercise of their right to self-determination and in improving their economic and social conditions. The first edition had been uploaded onto the United Nations decolonization website in June 2006. It was revised with several additions and the revision was made available on the website in January 2007. The print version, designed by the Graphic Design Unit of the Department, is scheduled to be published in English, French and Spanish in March 2007.

II. Coverage of issues before the General Assembly

4. The Department issued a total of 49 press releases (26 in English and 23 in French) on decolonization during the reporting period, covering meetings, statements and hearings of various United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Six press releases were issued on the Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Second International Decadé for the Eradication of Colonization: priorities for action, held in Yanuca, Fiji, from 28 to 30 November 2006.

5. The Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit issued media passes to visual and electronic media organizations to facilitate their coverage of meetings and/or hearings of the Special Committee. In order to ensure media coverage, the Unit announced through its daily Media Alert open meetings and hearings of the Special Committee, such as those held on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Puerto Rico, Tokelau and Western Sahara.

6. The topic of decolonization, including the role of the Trusteeship Council and of the Special Committee, was regularly included in the Department's guided tour of United Nations Headquarters. The set of maps on decolonization outside the Security Council Chamber assisted the guides in explaining to the visitors the historical process of decolonization as well as the locations of the current Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Department's Public Inquiries Unit continued to respond to queries from the public concerning decolonization.

III. United Nations Radio and Television

7. United Nations Radio continued to cover decolonization and related issues in its daily news programmes and current affairs magazines, in both official and non-official languages, for regional and worldwide dissemination.

8. Issues concerning Western Sahara continued to attract wide coverage by the Arabic and Spanish Radio Units. The French Radio Unit carried two stories on the Security Council's deliberations on Western Sahara. The Chinese Radio Unit featured a story on peacekeeping with a focus on the issue of Western Sahara, and carried an interview with the Secretary of the Fourth Committee who discussed the status of decolonization in relation to the United Nations mandate, and elaborated on the situation in Western Sahara as well as that in Tokelau. The Kiswahili Radio Unit covered the situation in Western Sahara five times in its news programmes. Topics included the report of the Secretary-General on Western Sahara, assistance from the World Food Programme to refugees, extension of the decolonization

mandate, and the appointment of a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

9. The English and Spanish Radio Units covered the Special Committee's meetings on Puerto Rico. The Spanish Unit also reported on the discussion regarding the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) between Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

IV. Internet

10. Coverage of developments and issues related to decolonization remained an important aspect of the Department's online news operations, carried out in part through the UN News Centre portal and the associated UN News Service. Among an array of stories devoted to the subject, news articles about the June 2006 meetings of the Special Committee and the Secretary-General's message to the Pacific regional seminar on decolonization held in Fiji in November 2006 were picked up by a number of external websites, including those of media outlets, non-governmental organizations and weblogs. News stories on decolonization were given prominent placement on the front page of the News Centre site, which attracts close to 1 million unique visitors a month (English) and has an e-mail news alerts service with over 46,000 subscribers in English and French.

V. Publications

11. The widely read publication *Basic Facts about the United Nations* devoted a full chapter to United Nations success stories and ongoing activities in support of decolonization.

12. *The Yearbook of the United Nations 2004* provided full and extensive coverage of the work and activities of the Special Committee during the year.

13. The *UN Chronicle* published three online features addressing the subject of decolonization. In October 2006, the *UN Chronicle* Online Edition launched a new website section, with exclusive articles covering the work of the General Assembly and the six Main Committees. Three articles in this section addressed decolonization, including an interview with the Chairman of the Fourth Committee, an overview of the main issues in the agenda of the Fourth Committee, including decolonization, and an article on a Fourth Committee resolution acknowledging the University for Peace for its work in preparing graduates for careers in colonized, post-conflict or newly independent regions.

VI. United Nations information centres and services

14. During the reporting period, the United Nations information service in Geneva issued press releases by human rights experts on the issue of decolonization and produced summaries of meetings where the subject had been discussed, in particular during a substantive debate in the newly created Human Rights Council and at a meeting of the Economic and Social Council dedicated to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples[1] by the specialized agencies. This press material was also posted on the media page of

the website maintained by the service. The United Nations information service in Vienna also continued to disseminate news on Non-Self-Governing Territories to interested non-governmental organizations, individuals in Austria and other client countries served by the service.

15. The United Nations information centre at Canberra disseminated information on decolonization to media in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, in the lead-up to the 2006 Pacific regional seminar. Its information officer was deployed to cover the seminar in Fiji and issued daily press releases and managed media enquiries. The information officer also met with a number of Fijian journalists and provided them with all press-related information, including the Department's brochures on decolonization and other important United Nations-related topics relevant to the South Pacific. The information centre continued to disseminate news from headquarters on Non-Self-Governing Territories to interested groups and individuals in Australia.

Notes

[1] See General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).